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Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 FEA-01 ERDA-05 AID-05 CEA-01

CIAE-00 CIEP-01 COME-00 EB-07 FPC-01 H-02 INR-07

INT-05 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 OMB-01 PM-04 USIA-06

SAM-01 OES-06 SP-02 SS-15 STR-04 TRSE-00 /103 W
---------- 050289
R 220877Z APR 76
FM AMCONSUL ASMARA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3935
AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
INFO AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
CONCUSNAVEUR LONDON
COMNAVTELCOM WASHDC
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN
COMIDEASTFOR
NAVCOMMUNIT ASMARA
NAVCOMMSTA NEA MAKRI
CNO WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 0326

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ENRG, ETRN, PINS ET
SUBJECT: POL CONVOY SYSTEM IN ERITREA

1. DEREK CURTIS, SHELL GENERAL MANAGER OF ETHIOPIA VISITED CONGEN ON APRIL 21 TO DISCUSS ERITREAN SITUATION AND REASON FOR HIS VISIT TO ASMARA. CURTIS AND SENIOR REPRESENTATIVES OF MOBIL, TOTAL AND AGIP ARE IN ASMARA AT THEIR OWN INITIATIVE FOLLOWING UP ON LETTER THEY WROTE TO BG GETACHEW, MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATOR OF ERITREA, REQUESTING MEETING TO DISCUSS REGULARIZATION OF POL CONVOYS IN ERITREA. ALTHOUGH THEY RECEIVED NO RESPONSE TO THEIR LETTER, THEY ARRIVED IN ASMARA APRIL 20, AND WERE TOLD TO FIRST MEET WITH VICE ADMINISTRATOR HIDAD KARRAR AND OTHER EPMG OFFICIALS
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CONCERNED WITH FUEL SUPPLY. AT THIS MEETING COMPANY REPRESENTATIVES

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PUT FURWARD BASIC PROPOSALS (1) THAT LOCAL COMPANY REP-
RESENTATIVES MEET ON PERIODIC BASIS WITH GETACHEW TO ACQUAINT
HIM WITH AND SEEK SOLUTIONS TO ONGOING PROBLEMS, AND (2) THAT
PLAN BE DEVISED FOR COMPENSATION OF POL TRANSPORTERS WHO ARE
REQUIRED BY EPMG TO COMMIT THEIR TRUCKS TO HIGH RISK ROUTES IN
SOUTHERN AND WESTERN ERITREA. LATTER PROBLEM CONCERNS PROTRACTED
TURN AROUND TIME RESULTING FROM LACK OF ESCORT TROOPS FOR CONVOYS,
ESPECIALLY THOSE TRAVELING TO AGORDAT, BARENTU AND TESSENNEY.

2. HIDAD'S RESPONSE TO COMPANY REPRESENTATIVES WAS GUARDED,
ALTHOUGH HE ADMITTED THAT CITED PROBLEMS DO EXIST. APPROACH TO
GETACHEW AFTERNOON OF APRIL 21 WAS TO BE COUCHED IN TERMS OF MUTUAL
INTEREST, AND EVERY EFFORT MADE TO AVOID CONFRONTATION WHICH
MIGHT RESULT IN GETACHEW PRESSING FOR NATIONALIZATION OF ALL POL
CARRIERS.

3. CURTIS HIGHLIGHTED SEVERAL SEVERE PROBLEMS ERITREAN POL TRANS-
PORTERS PRESENTLY FACE. FIRSTLY, THEIR VEHICLES ARE IN DIRE NEED
OF REPAIRS AND NEW TIRES. SECONDLY, THEY ARE FINDING INSURANCE
RATES BEYOND THEIR MEANS. THESE TWO FACTORS HAVE CAUSED SHELL
TRANSPORTERS TO REQUEST ETH$150,000 LOAN TO COVER THESE
EXPENSES OR FACE SEVERE LOSS OF CARRYING CAPACITY. SHELL FOR MOMENT
IS SIDE-STEPPING THIS REQUEST BY PRESENT INITIATIVE TO GETACHEW.
IN ADDITION TO THESE ISSUES, IRREGULARITY OF CONVOYS FROM MASSAWA
POSES SERIOUS SUPPLY AND MARKETING PROBLEMS.

4. IN ORDER PROVIDE ADEQUATE SUPPLY TO ASMARA AND ERITREA, THERE
MUST BE 12 CONVOYS FROM MASSAWA TO ASMARA PER MONTH. FIGURES FOR
1976 ARE AS FOLLOWS: JAN. - 11, FEB. - 9, MARCH - 8, AND APRIL -
7 TO DATE, WITH EXPECTATION FOR APRIL BEING TOTAL OF 10. THIS MEANS
AVERAGE SHORTFALL OF 25 PERCENT WHICH IS COMPENSATED FOR
BY CURRENTLY NEGLIGIBLE POL DISTRIBUTION INTO ERITREAN INTERIOR
(FORMERLY ABOUT 15 PERCENT OF TOTAL ERITREAN CONSUMPTION) AND BY
STRINGENT RATIONING (15 LITERS PER WEEK) TO PRIVATE VEHICLE
OWNERS. TO DATE THIS SITUATION HAS BEEN MARGINALLY TOLERABLE,
BUT CURTIS AND HIS COLLEAGUES BELIEVE THAT UNLESS CONVOYS CAN
BE REGULARIZED AND COMPENSATION OFFERED, ERITREAN POL TRANSPORT
FLEET WILL GRIND TO HALT.

5. FOR ADDIS: IN VIEW INTENSE INTEREST OF CONGEN IN TRANSPORTATION
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SITUATION IN ERITREA, AND AS CURTIS AND PARTY DEPARTED ASMARA
EARLY APRIL 22, WE WOULD APPRECIATE EMBASSY ECON SECTION CONTACTING
CURTIS AND INFORMING US AND OTHER ADDRESSEES OF OUTCOME OF HIS
MEETING WITH GETACHEW.
SHERRY

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